

# Positive Early Learning Experiences - Work Group

## Meeting Minutes

### May 13, 2019

**Present:** Cris Porter (Captain), Candice Hamel (Vice-Captain), Neil Wetherbee, Mike Carmean, Bea Cruz, Molly Grosvenor, Sheila Anderson, Pat Seiler, Peg Ramsdell (stand in for Heather at Northport Leelanau Children's Center rep), Sarah Jane Johnson  
**Not present:** Mike Hill, JoAnne Bear, Arden Wilson, Greta Campo, Laura Touhey Heather Bardenhagen, Nancy Popa

1. Greetings and Introductions
2. Review the **SPOT** analysis from the first whole committee meeting from notes from 4/18/2019. After perusal of notes Cris asked if there were additional comments/ideas for consideration which included:
  - Look at geographic and demographic area to ensure services are available and right sized for the area served.
  - Better coordination and collaboration.
  - Need to look at care availability and make sure there is county wide coverage.
  - Talk with businesses about shortage of workers/staff and if they were at capacity what that might mean for care slots needed.

The work group decided initial SPOT needed tweaking for clarity - the current document needed rearranged headings/input as there was a lot of random bytes from brainstorm process. The group generated the main areas of focus (buckets) for early learning should be strengths based and include programs, educators, and community based resources. The end goal is to acknowledge and build upon what's working - strengths - and create recommendations for the larger county workgroup assessing problem/threats and creating opportunity.

#### Strengths

All agreed Leelanau has a knowledgeable and experienced EC workforce, but low wages and poor benefits, turnover, and professional development are ongoing concerns. Programs are of better than average quality but are not always accessible due to geographic and financial barriers, and community based supports are available but have been weakened by lack of funding. Strengths include:

- *Educators:* Teachers/staff/home visitors/admin: great people, highly qualified, with PD opportunities available locally if there is time/\$ available
- *Programs* (focus on licensed): center based, home based, school based, Head Start, Migrant Head Start - generally good quality
- *Community based supports:* Parenting Communities, Health Dept, library story hours, power books, etc - home visitors, playgroups and opportunities for social connection and concrete resources that impact later learning available

#### Problems

- Funding: Staff- wages/benefits and continuing education make hiring and keeping high quality staff difficult
- Tuition - Leelanau families have trouble affording care
- Facilities - start up and maintenance costs are a barrier

- Regulations - licensing, Great Start to Readiness, Head Start, public schools all have layers of regulation that don't always align and are administratively time consuming/expensive - build partnerships to better align and clarify mandates
- Formal local data to drive action - individual centers may have data but don't have a means to share w each other - again time/\$ prohibitive
- Universal 4 year old preschool - at risk kids are not only population that need services - rural isolation is a risk factor - Leelanau County 91% rural
- Extended childcare more hours/more days a week for agricultural and service industry workforce
- Rural areas are usually underfunded - disproportionate statewide funding due to population density. Need to braided funding to include local private/ public/ business funding to support local initiatives.

### **Opportunities**

- Collaboration across sectors
- Mapping centers/care options and slot openings
- Creating a position for county coordination of all things EC
- Businesses partner with employees to cover/help cover staff child care needs
- Sub/flex - create a pool of vetted EC staff for short term need
- Staff training - better coordinate with NMC/TBAISD/GSQ
- Marketing - Tout and get out the life long impact and benefits of EC county wide
- Track EC students throughout county
- Provide parent data for each school/team
- Talk with young parents to identify issues they face (maybe at playgroups)

### **Threats**

- Provide parent data for each school/team
- \$\$\$ lack of funding has cut essential services in Leelanau and other rural counties over the last decade - need new funding streams
- Decreasing enrollments
- Attracting quality staff/turnover
- Lack of outreach - lack of community connections of families in need - Parenting Communities, Health Dept, Leelanau Christian Neighbors serve limited families
- Need to better work with groups outside of education (health department, police) that impact learning
- Lack of community understanding about the importance of EC

**Next steps:** Assess threats and problems to generate solutions. Look at opportunities bucket and try and distill - it should include coordination of services.

- Candice will create a map/list of services/programs available currently in LC and send to group
- Candice will share hard copy resource guide
- SJ will share GSRP impact data
- Cris will send notes and ask for reflection for next steps (especially for those unable to attend today who would like to provide feedback).